

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

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America and World War II, 1941-1945

Lesson 4 *The War Ends*

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What kinds of sacrifices does war require?

Reading HELPDESK

Content Vocabulary

hedgerow an enclosure made of dirt walls covered in shrubbery built to fence in cattle and crops

napalm a type of jellied gasoline

Academic Vocabulary

despite in spite of

nuclear relating to the nucleus of an atom

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

**networks**

America and World War II, 1941-1945

TAKING NOTES: Outlining

ACTIVITY As you read, create an outline similar to the one below, using the major headings as the main points.

The War Ends

I. The Third Reich Collapses

- A.
- B.

II.

- A.
- B.

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Fierce fighting in both Europe and the Pacific during 1945 led to the defeat of the Axis powers. As the war ended, the Allies began war-crimes trials as part of a plan to build a better world.

The Third Reich Collapses

GUIDING QUESTION Why was the Battle of the Bulge so important to the Allied forces?

The D-Day invasion of Normandy was a success. However, winning the battle was difficult because **hedgerows** surrounded farm fields in Normandy. Hedgerows were walls of dirt with bushes and plants growing from them. Farmers used them as fences around their land. The hedgerows protected the Germans as they fought Allied troops. Finally, on July 25, 1944, an attack by 2,500 U.S. bombers blew an opening in the German lines. U.S. tanks quickly advanced across the fields.

As the Allies broke out of Normandy, the French Resistance carried out a rebellion in Paris. The French Resistance was a group of French civilians who had secretly organized to resist the German occupation. The Allies liberated Paris on August 25. French citizens filled the streets to celebrate the victory.

The Battle of the Bulge

As the Allies advanced toward the German border, Hitler tried to slow them down. He planned to cut off Allied supplies coming through Antwerp, Belgium. The Germans attacked on December 16, 1944, just before dawn. The weather was bitterly cold. Heavy snow covered the ground. The Germans surprised the first U.S. troops. They broke through U.S. lines and advanced to the west. On maps showing the armies' positions, the section where they broke through the U.S. defenses curved outward. That section of the line looked like a bulge. For this reason, the battle became known as the Battle of the Bulge.

Eisenhower ordered General Patton to join the battle. In just three days, in spite of snow, Patton arrived with reinforcements and began attacking the German lines. Soon the weather improved and Allied aircraft began bombing German fuel stations. On Christmas Eve, German troops moving toward Antwerp were forced to stop. They had lost many men, and they were out of fuel. Two days later, Patton's

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

**networks**

America and World War II, 1941-1945

troops broke through the German lines. The fighting continued for three weeks. On January 8, the Germans began to retreat. They had suffered more than 100,000 casualties. They had very few resources left to prevent the Allies from entering Germany. The Allies had won the Battle of the Bulge.

The War Ends in Europe

U.S. and British troops continued the fight to liberate France. Meanwhile, the Soviets attacked German troops in Russia. By the end of the Battle of the Bulge, the Soviets had driven Hitler's forces out of Russia and across Poland. In February 1945, the Soviets were only 35 miles (56 km) from Germany's capital, Berlin.

Soviets crossed Germany's eastern border at the same time U.S. forces attacked Germany's western border. By the end of February 1945, U.S. troops had reached the Rhine River. It was Germany's last major line of defense in the west. American tanks crossed the Rhine on March 7, 1945. As German defenses collapsed, U.S. troops moved east. Soon, they were less than 70 miles (113 km) from Berlin. On April 16, Soviet troops finally broke through the German defenses. Five days later they were outside Berlin.

Adolf Hitler was hidden deep inside his Berlin bunker. He knew the end was near. On April 30, 1945, he killed himself. On May 7, 1945, Germany accepted the terms for an unconditional surrender. May 8, 1945, was declared V-E Day. The letters stood for "Victory in Europe."

PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining Why was the Battle of the Bulge such a disastrous defeat for Germany?

Japan Is Defeated

GUIDING QUESTION Do you agree or disagree with President Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb? Explain your reasons.

President Roosevelt did not live to see the defeat of Germany. He had a stroke while vacationing in Warm Springs, Georgia, and died on April 12, 1945. His vice president, Harry S. Truman, became president during this difficult time.

Truman felt great sadness over Roosevelt's death as well as the enormous weight of his new role. **Despite** his feelings, Truman immediately made decisions about the war. Germany surrendered a few weeks after Truman took office. However, Japan continued to fight. Within his first six months in office, Truman had to make some of the most difficult choices of the war.

The Battle of Iwo Jima

On November 24, 1944, the U.S. bombed Tokyo. A group of 80 B-29 Superfortress bombers based on the Mariana Islands flew more than 1,500 miles (2,414 km) to reach Tokyo. Many of their bombs missed the targets. By the time they reached Japan they did not have enough fuel to make adjustments to fix mistakes they had made about the distance and direction. Some planes needed to land the B-29s and

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

**networks**

America and World War II, 1941-1945

refuel before trying to bomb their targets. They needed an island closer to Japan. U.S. military planners chose the island of Iwo Jima.

Iwo Jima was the perfect location. It was about halfway between the Mariana Islands and Japan. However, the island would be difficult to capture. It had an inactive volcano at its southern end. Rocky cliffs, deep canyons, and many caves broke up the rough land. Volcanic ash covered the ground. Even worse, the Japanese had built a huge system of concrete bunkers. Miles of tunnels connected the bunkers.

On February 19, 1945, about 60,000 marines made a difficult landing on Iwo Jima. The Japanese shot at the marines jumping off the amphibtracs. Marines who made it to shore could hardly walk in the soft ash. They crawled inland under heavy fire. They attacked the Japanese bunkers with fire and explosives. Eventually, the United States captured the island. However, more than 6,800 men died fighting for it.

Firebombing Japan

General Curtis LeMay was the commander of the B-29s based in the Marianas. While he waited for the airfields on Iwo Jima to be built, he tried a different strategy to help the bombers hit their targets. LeMay ordered the bombers to drop bombs filled with **napalm**, a kind of jellied gasoline. A bomb with napalm did not just explode. It also started huge fires. If the B-29s missed their targets, LeMay believed, the fierce fires caused by napalm would spread to the intended targets.

The use of firebombs was controversial because the fires killed civilians. However, LeMay believed that the U.S. had to destroy Japan's war production quickly. When B-29s attacked Tokyo with firebombs on March 9, 1945, strong winds made the fire burn intensely. The fire sucked the oxygen out of the air, killing thousands of people because they had no air to breathe.

The Tokyo firebombing killed more than 80,000 people and destroyed more than 250,000 buildings. By the end of June 1945, Japan's six most important industrial cities had been firebombed. By the end of the war, the B-29s had firebombed 67 Japanese cities.

The Invasion of Okinawa

Although firebombing caused enormous damage, Japan showed no sign of being ready to surrender in the spring of 1945. Many U.S. officials believed that Japan itself had to be invaded to end the war. To prepare for the invasion, the United States needed a base near Japan to store supplies and assemble troops. Iwo Jima was too small and too far from Japan to make invasion possible. U.S. military planners chose Okinawa, which was only 350 miles (563 km) from Japan.

When U.S. troops landed on Okinawa on April 1, 1945, the Japanese did not defend the beaches. Instead, Japanese troops took up positions in the island's mountains. As U.S. troops fought their way up the mountains, the Japanese fired at them with machine guns and other weapons. More than 12,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, and marines died during the fighting. However, by June 22, 1945, Okinawa had finally been captured.

The Terms for Surrender

Shortly after the United States captured Okinawa, the Japanese emperor, Hirohito,

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

**networks**

America and World War II, 1941-1945

told his government to find a way to end the war. Many Japanese leaders were willing to surrender with one condition—Hirohito must stay in power. This caused a problem because the United States demanded unconditional surrender.

U.S. officials knew that their decision about Hirohito was the most important issue for the Japanese. Most Americans, however, wanted Hirohito removed because they blamed him for the war. President Truman did not want to go against public opinion. He also knew the United States was almost ready to test a new weapon that might force Japan to surrender without any conditions. The new weapon was the atomic bomb.

The Manhattan Project

Leo Szilard was the first scientist to suggest that splitting the atom might release enormous energy. In 1939 Szilard, a Jewish scientist who escaped from the Nazis, learned that German scientists had split the uranium atom. Szilard was now worried that the Nazis were working on an atomic bomb. He convinced the world's best-known physicist, Albert Einstein, to send a letter to President Roosevelt. Szilard helped Einstein write the letter, which warned the president that uranium could be used to make a new kind of bomb that would be more powerful than any bomb ever made.

Roosevelt set up a scientific committee to study the issue. In 1941 the committee met with British scientists who were already working on an atomic bomb. The Americans convinced Roosevelt to begin a program to build an atomic bomb.

The secret U.S. program to build an atomic bomb was code-named the Manhattan Project. General Leslie R. Groves led the project. The first breakthrough came in 1942. Szilard and Enrico Fermi, another physicist, built the world's first **nuclear** reactor. They built it at the University of Chicago. Groves then organized a team of engineers and scientists to build an atomic bomb. The team worked in a secret laboratory in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer led the team. On July 16, 1945, they set off the world's first atomic bomb in New Mexico.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Even before the bomb was tested, U.S. officials debated how it would be used. Admiral William Leahy, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, opposed using the bomb because it would kill civilians. He believed the United States could convince Japan to surrender by blocking trade and using regular bombs. Secretary of War Henry Stimson wanted to warn the Japanese about the bomb. Then, he wanted to give them a chance for their emperor to stay in power if they surrendered. Secretary of State James Byrnes wanted to drop the bomb on Japan without warning.

President Truman later wrote that he always believed the United States had built the bomb to be used as a weapon not as just a threat. His advisers had warned him that invading Japan would result in many, many U.S. casualties. Truman wanted to use any method possible to save U.S. lives.

The Allies warned Japan that the country would be destroyed if Japan did not surrender. When the Japanese did not reply, Truman ordered the military to drop the bomb. On August 6, 1945, a B-29 bomber named *Enola Gay* dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, an important industrial city in Japan. The bomb's code name was "Little Boy."

Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

**networks**

America and World War II, 1941-1945

Between 80,000 and 120,000 people died instantly and thousands more died later from burns and radiation sickness. The bomb destroyed about 63 percent of the city. Three days later, on August 9, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. Later that day, the United States dropped another atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki. This one was code-named "Fat Man." The bomb killed between 35,000 and 74,000 people. The bombings and the shock of the Soviets joining the war were too much for the emperor. Hirohito ordered his government to surrender. Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945. The day was called V-J day for "Victory over Japan." The long war was over.

Putting the Enemy on Trial

In August 1945, the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union created the International Military Tribunal (IMT). The IMT was set up to punish German and Japanese leaders for war crimes. The tribunal tried German leaders in Nuremberg, Germany, where Hitler had once held gatherings for the Nazi Party.

Twenty-two German leaders were prosecuted at the Nuremberg Trials. Three were found not guilty. Seven were sent to prison. Twelve were sentenced to death. Trials of lower-level leaders continued until April 1949. There were 24 more death sentences and 107 more Germans were sent to prison.

Similar trials were held in Tokyo. The IMT for the Far East charged 25 Japanese leaders with war crimes. The Allies did not charge Hirohito. They feared that putting the emperor on trial would lead to an uprising. Eighteen Japanese defendants were sent to prison. The rest were sentenced to death by hanging.

The trials punished many of the people responsible for World War II and the Holocaust. However, the trials were also part of the U.S. plan for building a better world. Robert Jackson was one of the lead lawyers for the United States at Nuremberg. He said that the trials were important because they made sure people paid attention to the horrible things that had happened. He pointed out that if people did not pay attention, such things might happen again.

PROGRESS CHECK

Analyzing What arguments did Truman consider when deciding whether to use the atomic bomb?
